

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2016

SPEECH OF

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 13, 2015

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1735) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2016 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes:

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Chair, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 1735, the FY16 National Defense Authorization Act.

The National Defense Authorization Act is one of the most important pieces of legislation that this body votes on each year. While this bill does authorize much needed funding for our men and women in uniform, ultimately it ignores the current budget landscape that our military is facing.

Consistent with the Republican budget, this year's defense authorization bill uses the Overseas Contingency Operations budget as a backdoor loophole to get around sequestration by funding \$38 billion of the Pentagon's regular base budget activities with war funds—a blatant abuse of the budget process. Just one year ago, House Republicans criticized the abuse of the OCO loophole in their budget report, stating that it "undermines the integrity of the budget process" and that the Budget Committee would "oppose increases above the levels the Administration and our military commanders say are needed to carry out operations unless it can be clearly demonstrated that such amounts are war-related."

Moreover, in following the strategy of the Republican budget, the NDAA begins the process of locking in sequestration for non-defense programs, which will have a devastating impact on investments critical to the nation. We need to get back to the table to have an honest debate about our budget and renegotiate the funding caps for both defense and nondefense. Only then will we be able to provide the necessary resources for our national security needs and to ensure we keep the nation's commitments to education, research, infrastructure, and other crucial drivers of economic prosperity.

I also have many problems with a number of misguided provisions in this year's NDAA. Once again, this year's NDAA includes a provision to continue funding restrictions on the construction or modification of detention facilities in the United States to house Guantanamo detainees. I strongly opposed Rep. Walorski's amendment to keep Guantanamo open for at least two more years beyond FY16 and was disappointed that an amendment offered by Ranking Member Smith to provide a framework for closure of Guantanamo by the end of 2016 was rejected.

I also oppose efforts by Republicans to strike an important provision in this bill which would have stated that it was the sense of the House that our military should review whether "DREAMers" should be allowed to enlist and serve in the Armed Forces. In addition, I object to provisions that prohibit the Pentagon from entering into contracts to construct alter-

native fuel refineries and prevent our military from developing alternative energy sources that have the potential to save money and enhance our energy security. Finally, I object to the inclusion of unrequested funding for many weapons systems, including an extra \$1.15 billion for extra F/A-18 aircraft and \$128 million for extra UH-60 helicopters.

Despite my opposition to the overall legislation, I was pleased that a bipartisan amendment I introduced with Congressman Mulvaney was adopted and will require Congress to report on how funds authorized for overseas contingency operations were ultimately used. I also support the increased 2.3 percent pay raise for our troops and their families.

While this legislation does authorize much needed funding for programs that benefit our men and women in uniform, ultimately, this bill falls short in too many areas. It is my hope that many of my objections to the NDAA will be resolved in Conference with the Senate but I can't support it in its current form.

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY
ON THE WAY TO 3 MILLION HOMES

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 20, 2015

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it's Friday night. You come home from work, tired and hungry for supper.

There is a big stack of mail on the table you sift through, including one piece addressed to you from the government.

You open the envelope only to find a survey. The survey asks you a series of questions like: How many toilets do you have in your house? When do you leave and return from work? Does anyone in your home suffer from mental illness? Does your house have a sink with a faucet? Do you have a refrigerator?

This government-mandated questionnaire is known as the American Community Survey. Three million Americans each year are "lucky" enough to be selected to answer this mandatory survey. The American Community Survey is independent from the Census. This survey is more intrusive, more personal and more time consuming. Not to mention, it is 28 pages long and mandatory.

Understandably, many people dismiss this survey, tossing it out or feeling too uncomfortable to divulge such personal information. But throwing it away does not make it disappear.

If you fail to answer the survey, the government will come after you. It begins with phone calls. If the calls go unanswered or the survey is incomplete, the calls will increase from weekly to daily. Then the eyes of the federal government are sent to houses of the unwilling, to ring the doorbell and peak in the window. This is harassment. No one wants the government doing drop-ins to their home. Quite the opposite, the majority of Americans want the government to leave them alone. And on top of all the harassment and intimidation by Census Bureau emissaries, citizens who still choose not to answer, are threatened with a criminal penalty, and in some cases face up to a \$5,000 fine.

In an effort to help protect American's privacy, I reintroduced legislation that would

make the American Community Survey voluntary. This survey is another example of unnecessary and completely unwarranted government intrusion.

The federal government has no right to force Americans to divulge such private information, especially information that they are uncomfortable giving away.

But this is happening all over America and even right here in Southeast Texas. I have had neighbors contact me for years complaining about this government harassment.

According to the Constitution, article 1, section 2, a count of the nation's population is required to be conducted every ten years. The purpose of the Census is to apportion congressional seats and levy direct taxes. But the American Community Survey achieves none of that, except information on American's toilet flushing patterns.

I believe in a limited government and will work to protect American citizens from government abuse and harassment. Bottom line, Americans should have the choice on whether they want to tell Washington how many toilets they have.

And that's just the way it is.

CELEBRATING 50TH ANNIVERSARY
OF HEAD START

HON. G.K. BUTTERFIELD

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 20, 2015

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate and celebrate Head Start on its 50th year of service to children and families. Fifty years ago yesterday, President Lyndon Johnson stood in the White House Rose Garden and announced the creation of Head Start.

This pioneering federal program became a foundation of his historic anti-poverty plan. Head Start was designed to ensure that children from low-income families had access to a quality early childhood education.

This program has long served as a catalyst for long-term educational achievement and is considered the nation's premier school readiness program.

Head Start recognizes that parents are the initial and most important educators in their child's life and works to inspire and support affirmative parental involvement with their children.

In addition to building strong parent-child relationships, Head Start along with Early Head Start, provides extensive services to promote strong mental, social, and emotional development in children from birth to age five.

Head Start also provides children and their families with health screenings and nutritional education, among other integral services. The services offered to our communities by Head Start are copious and invaluable.

Evidence-based studies have shown Head Start to be tremendously effective at promoting academic success in school, avoiding crime, and fostering the development of productive, successful leaders.

Head Start is one of the longest running programs in the United States whose mission is to address systemic poverty, and it has indeed yielded impressive results.

In just 2014, Head Start served over 20,000 children and families in North Carolina alone,

including nearly 5,000 in my congressional district. Since its creation 50 years ago, more than 32 million children and families have reaped the benefits of Head Start.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating Head Start for 50 years of service and enrichment to our nation's children and their families. Its involvement in the lives of our young people is exceptionally significant and deserving of our sincere appreciation.

IN HONOR OF LIFEGUARD THOMAS HOLT

HON. JUAN VARGAS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 20, 2015

Mr. VARGAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Thomas Holt for the outstanding commitment and dedication he has demonstrated to the City of Imperial Beach. Mr. Holt started his public service as an ocean lifeguard in 1967. During his 47 years of service, Thomas Holt made thousands of ocean rescues and provided medical aid to hundreds of beach visitors.

On March 1, 2014, Mr. Holt officially retired at the age of 70. His service is a remarkable achievement in the ocean lifeguarding field. Mr. Holt is recognized by his lifeguard colleagues and the community of Imperial Beach as a hardworking, reliable and dedicated mentor.

Mr. Holt has devoted his life to preserving the lives of others. His outstanding achievements, his leadership and his commitment to the people of California's 51st District, are an inspiration to us all.

RECOGNIZING ST. JOHN'S-ST. ANDREW'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL CENTENNIAL

HON. TOM EMMER

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 20, 2015

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of St. John's-St. Andrew's Catholic School in Meire Grove, Minnesota, as it celebrates its centennial.

Founded in 1915, the current schoolhouse was built to meet the growing needs of a thriving Catholic community. After years of remodeling and improvements, and a shift towards being a parochial school, St. John's-St. Andrew's now consists of 40 families. An impressive growth, considering Catholic education in the area began with a deserted log church and 20 children.

For a century, central Minnesotans have sent their sons and daughters to this historic school knowing that they will receive a substantive education centered around Christ. For many, this Catholic tradition spans several generations.

I pray that these children continue to grow in their faith and that they continue to follow Christ's example of service and respect.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that this body join me in congratulating St. John's-St. Andrew's Catholic School on 100 years, and thanking them for

building such a strong Catholic-educated community. May their success continue for decades to come.

INTRODUCTION OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN RESTORATION ACT

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 20, 2015

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the Columbia River Basin Restoration Act, a bill that would bring much needed resources to clean up toxic pollution in the Columbia River Basin. The Columbia River is the largest river in the Pacific Northwest. The River and its tributaries provide significant ecological and economic benefits to the Pacific Northwest and the entire United States. Historically, the Columbia and its tributaries have constituted the largest salmon-producing river system in the world, with annual returns peaking at 16 million fish.

The Columbia River was designated an Estuary of National Significance in 1995 and a Large Aquatic Ecosystem (LAE) by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2006. Yet it remains the only LAE to receive zero Congressional funding pursuant to this designation—despite a growing problem of toxic contamination throughout the River Basin.

Toxic contaminants are present throughout the Columbia River Basin and are harmful to public health and ecosystem health. These contaminants make their way into fish tissues, which when consumed can be damaging to human health. Some of these toxics are known to increase cancer risks and have been linked with neurological, developmental and reproductive problems, including birth defects and learning disabilities. This concern is particularly pressing for tribal populations, who rely on local fish as a dietary and cultural staple and consume large quantities of resident fish. In wildlife, contaminants increase mortality and disease susceptibility and impair reproduction and the ability of the fish to avoid predators.

In 2013, the States of Oregon and Washington issued fish advisories warning the public to protect itself against mercury and PCB contamination by limiting consumption of resident fish species living in the 150 mile stretch of river between Bonneville and McNary Dams.

This bill authorizes the EPA to establish a voluntary, competitive Columbia River Basin grants program to support projects aimed at reducing pollution, cleaning up contaminated sites, improving water quality, monitoring the Basin, and promoting citizen engagement. Eligible entities may include States, tribal and local governments, nonprofits, and private landowners. The legislation authorizes \$50 million per year for five years for this effort, which is estimated to create between 700 and 1,000 family wage jobs per year in the region.

The Columbia River is the lifeblood of the Pacific Northwest, but it has become dangerously polluted. It is time to clean up the Columbia River and improve water quality and river health for generations to come.

IN RECOGNITION OF COL. ALFRED ROBERT FRENCH II

HON. RUBEN GALLEG

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 20, 2015

Mr. GALLEG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute, congratulate and recognize Col. Alfred Robert French II, M.D., for his distinguished military career and years of dedicated service to our nation as we celebrate his upcoming 89th birthday.

Col. French II was raised in Bisbee, AZ and attended Bisbee High School, Wentworth Military Academy and Valley Forge Military Academy, graduating in 1944. Upon graduation, Col. French sought immediate induction into the U.S. Army and his journey in the service of our nation began in a crowded ship that left Brooklyn, New York, bound for Le Havre, France.

Upon arrival, Col. French II was requisitioned by the 61st Signal Battalion of the Third Army and began his service as a driver and a courier in Eider Oberstein, Germany. On occasion, he would drive through Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France, all in one day. He also spent time in the Saar Protectorate, and then moved to Neckersulm, Germany, where he served as a Guard in a Displaced Persons (DP) camp.

Col. French was eventually transferred to Heidelberg, Germany and assigned to the 79th field Artillery group. There, Col. French II had the honor of attending General Patton's funeral service.

Col. French II returned to Phoenix, AZ, and studied at the University of Arizona. Soon after, however, he decided to continue his service to our country by reenlisting in the Army. He was deployed to Japan with the Army of Occupation and subsequently participated in the first battle of the Korean War as part of Task Force Smith, the first U.S. ground maneuver unit to enter combat in Korea.

Throughout his years of service, Col. French II has won numerous awards and distinctions, including the Bronze Star Medal, the Combat Infantry Badge, the Korean Service Medal, and the UN Service Medal.

After the war, Col. French II returned to Phoenix, AZ, and utilized the G.I. Bill to receive a B.S. from Arizona State University. He later graduated from Tulane Medical School with a specialty in Ophthalmology in 1959 and joined his father, Harry French, M.D., in private practice. Col. French II joined the Army National Guard in 1976 and served until 1993.

Mr. Speaker, Col. Alfred French II is a proud member of the Greatest Generation. He fought for our freedom in two different wars and has lived a life defined by service and integrity. I am deeply honored to recognize all that Col. French II has achieved and pleased to congratulate him as he celebrates his 89th birthday.

HONORING COACH BILL GUTHRIDGE

HON. DAVID E. PRICE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 20, 2015

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to honor the memory